

**SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE II**  
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**MODULE: I, ORGANISATION OF GOVERNMENT**

**TOPIC: MILITARY REGIME**

**MILITARY REGIME: MEANING FEATURES**

Military regimes are states where members of the armed forces make the top political decisions exclusively or predominantly. Although the term covers the cases where an alien army of occupation rules a conquered state (as the Allied military governments in Germany and Italy during the second world war), the term, military regime, is frequently used with reference to states whose military forces have supplanted a former civilian government and rule in their own name.

Military governments usually have large civilian component-bureaucrats, managers, politicians and technocrats. Some scholars therefore argue that the dichotomy between military and civilian rulers can hardly be sustained. Amos Perlmutter, for instance, has argued that 'modern military regimes are not purely military in composition. Instead they are fusionist, that is, they are military-civil regimes'. But the presence of civilian technocrats and political renegades in the governing council does not blur the distinction between military and civilian regimes. Civilian advisors joining the military government, it should be noted, hold office on the sufferance of the military rulers. Moreover, in a military regime, it is the military ruler and his advisors from the armed forces who play the predominant role in all 'decisions of decisive consequence'. Thus military regime emerges as a distinct sub-type of authoritarianism.

Military regimes differ from other forms of authoritarianism in terms of origin or legitimacy or range of governmental penetration into the society or in combinations of all these factors. Modern military regimes differ from the civilian autocratic regimes in their sources of legitimacy. The civilian dictators in the Third world derive their legitimacy from their leadership in the independence struggle or from the leadership of the single parties founded by them or from some rigged election. They retain their power by maintaining 'a vertical network of personal and patron-client relations'. Military rulers also resort to this strategy of rulership, but their regimes suffer from an innate sense of lack of legitimacy.

Military regimes should also be distinguished from totalitarian regimes. One can identify three differences between the two. First, totalitarian regime claim legitimacy

on the basis of their ideologies, which, they state, are higher and nobler forms of democracy. Military regimes on the other hand, do not generally espouse elaborate and guiding ideologies. Secondly, unlike military regimes, which come into being as a result of intervention by the armed forces in politics, totalitarian dictators seize power by organising armed political parties. Once in power, totalitarian dictators establish the supremacy of their parties over all organisations, including the armed forces. Finally, military regimes allow limited pluralism, though there is no responsible government. Totalitarian regimes on the other hand, try to control the whole society through the single-party system and widespread use of terror.

### **Types of Military Regimes**

Broadly speaking, different military regimes can be distinguished by the place the military hold in the decision making structure of the state and or by what they do with the power they wield.

The role played by the military in top decision-making varies. We can broadly distinguish two types here. First, there is the military-junta type in which the supreme policy making organ is a junta or command council of officers representing the three services (army, navy and the air force). The military junta usually appoints a civilian cabinet to administer under its authority. Parties and legislatures are suppressed or else only a single official party is permitted. Often parties and legislatures are nominal and subservient artefact of the military executive. The military, as represented by its senior officers, plays the active and supreme role in policy making in the military junta type of regime. Secondly, there is the presidential type in which the military play a supportive role rather than a creative or active role. Here the cabinet is formed largely or wholly from civilian rather than military personnel. In Zaire for instance, the army's role is supportive of the president, while the official party is largely nominal. In Iraq and Syria, however, the local Ba'ath parties are true vanguard parties, in a symbiotic relationship with the officer corps. Here the military's role is not limited to being supportive, but extends to play a more active role. However, the existence of the party enables the president to arbitrate, and so exert independent leadership over both civilian and military sectors.

Military regimes can also be distinguished by the way they wield power. Some military governments confine themselves to supervising or 'patrolling' the society. In Thailand, for instance, the largely military cabinets permit the civil service a wide autonomy in running affairs, and preside over what is on the whole a free wheeling economy. In Ghana and Nigeria, however, the governments go further: they direct a national programme, but they leave the civil service to administer it. Finally, there are those military regimes, such as those in Burma and in Indonesia, in which the armed

forces not only exert supreme authority in policy making but also play a large part in actual administration.

**REFERENCE:**

<http://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/20939/1/Unit-15.pdf>